An Assessment of the Free Quality School Education in Sierra Leone- August 2020-2021

Education For All Coalition -Sierra Leone(EFAC-SL)

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Abbreviations

BECE	-	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CPD	-	Continuing Professional Development
CSOs	-	Civil Society Education
DDE	-	District Director of Education
ECCD	-	Early Childhood Care Development
EFA – SL	-	Education For All Coalition Sierra Leone
ESP	-	Education Sector Plan
FREE	-	Focusing Resources in Equity and Excellence
FQSE	-	Free Quality School Education
GoSL	-	Government of Sierra Leone
HT	-	Head Teachers
JSS	-	Junior Secondary School
MBSSE	-	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MICS	-	Multi Indicator Cluster Survey
MTNDP	-	Medium Term National Development Plan
NCTVA	-	National Council for Technical Vocational and other Awards
NPSE	-	National Primary School Examination
SL	-	Sierra Leone
SLIHS	-	Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey
SMCs	-	School Management Committees
SSS	-	Senior Secondary School
ToR	-	Terms of Reference
WASSCE	-	West African Secondary Schools Certificate Examination

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) launched the 'Free Quality Primary and Secondary Education program', on 20th August, 2018 targeting government and government assisted schools all over the country. The government's support of the 'Free Quality Education' include free fee subsidy for pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools; fees for National Primary School Examination (NPSE), Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Council for Technical Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA) examinations. The free education program also provide text books in the core subjects such as English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Integrated Science and Civic Education; essential teaching and learning materials for children and teachers – including exercise books, pens, pencils, chalks, registers and sports equipment, as well as school meal. Furniture to also be provided to schools in all districts. By eliminating school fees and providing quality education free of charge, Government aims to ensure that all school-age children have access to quality education, and this approach is strengthened by implementing and enforcing the Education Act of 2004 that incriminates parents that fail to send their children to school.

Education For All Coalition Sierra Leone (EFA-SL), a Coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with interest in promoting education advocacy and facilitating systems and processes that increase engagement and participation in education, commissioned a study to assess the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) after almost two and half years of its introduction and implementation. The purpose of the research is to generate and document evidence on the quick wins and the potential challenges that are affecting the FQSE in Sierra Leone and determine a concerted approach in addressing such challenges.

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. Assess the intermediate gains of the FQSE program focusing on the achievements and challenges.
2. Analyze the size of the government budget allocated to basic educations specifically focusing on FQSE, and ascertain the resource flows for the FQSE such as support from donors; transfers from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Education; to Local councils and to schools.

Summary of key Findings and Recommendations

Knowledge of the FQSE - In terms of knowledge of the FQSE program, 81% of DDs responses indicated that the FQSE implementation is guided by a policy or program framework; and 19% of the respondents did not provide appropriate response. 100% of the Head Teachers and parents' respondents indicated their knowledge of the FQSE program, these show that some good effort has been put into raising awareness and providing the information out to communities on the program.

With the good knowledge and understanding of respondents about the FQSE program, respondents indicated their perceived knowledge of the FQSE program by mentioning what they knew about the program. 48% of the respondents indicated the non-payment of school fees; 40% indicate the supply of teaching and learning materials and 11% indicating the introduction of school feeding as key areas of the FQSE program.

On how they got to know about the FQSE program, 100% of the parents indicated that they learnt about the FQSE program from meetings held in the schools.

The study solicited information on whether extra payments were made to schools and for what purpose. 84% of the responses indicated that they do not make any extra payments to schools; 16% indicated that some extra payments were made to schools. For this 16%, 7.3% made payments towards uniforms; 4.2% made payments to support community teachers not on the payroll; 2.7 made payments for passport pictures for pupils preparing for public examinations; 2.4% made payments towards accommodation for pupils taking public exams in centers outside of their communities.

Universal Access - Enrollments - The study solicited the state of enrolments between 2018 and 2019 and observed enrolments increased significantly following the introduction and implementation of the FQSE in all schools - government owned as well as government assisted schools (mission and community schools). From 2018 - 2019 there were 28.7% increase (36,467 more) in pre-primary enrolments; 22.6%

increase at the primary school level with 400,000 new learners; 30.2% accounting for 136,185 new students at the JSS levels and 32.3% at SSS level with 98,949.

The enrollment trends show more girls were enrolled than boys in all categories of the school system in the early stage of the education system but boys have a slightly higher advantage as they progress in the higher levels.

Retention - Primary completion rate is estimated at 82% with the annual school census data from 2019. This shows that one out of five pupils still drop out of formal schooling before reaching the end of the primary level (girls being a little more disadvantaged than boys). This falls a bit short of the 85% target for primary school completion targeted in the 2018-2020 sector plan. At the JSS level, access ranges between 70% and 83%, and completion between 58% and 67%. Access to SSS is estimated around 50%, while completion ranges between 27% and 44%[1].

Classroom Accommodation - With the massive boost in enrolment following the launch of the FQSE, there is a dire need for classrooms and furniture in schools across the country. The National schools' census 2019 report classifies classrooms into three main categories - solid, semi-solid and makeshift. Within these groups, there are sound classrooms while others require repairs. The results of the school census showed that at least 52.3%, 53.2%, 64.6 of classrooms in pre-primary, junior secondary and senior secondary respectively are solid and in good condition. 4 in 10 classrooms in primary schools are solid with no need for repair. In contrast, 6.7% of the classrooms in junior and senior secondary are makeshifts (the materials used in making the classrooms being of temporary nature (twigs and grass). The share of classrooms that are makeshift varies from school level - 10.4% in pre-primary, 8.6% in primary, 4.5% in junior secondary and 3.5% in senior secondary.

In terms of furniture, government has not allocated any funds for this since 2018. There is a need for furniture in schools across the country. This is important if the Government's desire to get schools revert to the one-shift system is to be realized. However, reports from the districts indicate that there is a dearth of classroom and furniture to accommodate pupils confortably in schools and if parents are not required to support their children sit properly in schools GoSL needs some investment in more structures as well as sitting accommodation.

Quality Teaching and Learning – teaching and learning materials in schools were still a serious challenge particularly in rural areas and Head Teachers attested that they were still awaiting their consignments at the time of the study. Enrolments of pupils in schools far outweigh the teacher numbers in school. This has affected Pupil teacher ratios across the board and needs to be addressed. The TSC has started to support teachers with continuing professional development. There is need to make teachers in hard to reach areas benefit from these

Financing Education in Sierra Leone - In 2019, the government spent a total of Le 1.06 trillion to cover teacher/instructor/lecturer salaries, grants-in-aid, tuition grants, purchase of books and other teaching and learning materials, development and maintenance of infrastructure, as well as administration and supervision for the delivery of FQSE. This represented 20% of the government's discretionary spending. The 20% spending is done at the level of central Ministries as well as at the level of Local Governments. The central Ministries comprises Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) as well as the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) while at the Local councils' level, expenditures support decentralized education service delivery through local government transfers.

Government's recurrent expenditure, stood at Le 937.5 billion through MBSSE, MTHE and TSC, an estimated Le 3.5 billion through the Ministry of Health's School of Nursing, and Le 105 billion through the 21 local councils[2]. Spending at central level represented 90% of recurrent expenditure, indicating that while there is a strong push for decentralization, most of the resources are still managed from the central government institutions in Freetown

The expenditure profile shows that 38.9% of the 41.5% is allocated to the two central ministries. The expenditure expended by central Ministries accounted for Textbooks – Teaching and learning materials 15.0% only 6.3% was expended for primary education with expenditures towards school feeding and support to physically challenged schools. Secondary education, however accounted for 33.6% which went towards Grants in Aid to Government Boarding Schools and tuition fees with subsidies accounting for 12.3%; Examination Fees

[1] *Education Sector Analysis 2020*

[2] Education sector analysis report, Sierra Leone 2020

to WAEC for WASCE which apply to the three examination classes only consume the least at 1.1%. Development budget was very marginal and does not consciously reflect Government's capital investment in Education.

Proposed FQSE investment - The MBSSE developed a simulation model to cost all the elements of the FQSE according to the Results Framework. The model made some generalized assumptions to project equal annual changes in key parameters based on learner projections over the Plan Period of 2019 – 2023, such as school age population statistics and retention rates, transition rates from one cycle to the next. Overall population growth rate (% p.a.) to remain below 2.5% over the Plan Period; Percentage allocation to education to remain at least 21% over the Plan Period with about 80% of this allocated to Basic and Senior Secondary Education.

The model is based on three scenarios, the High, Medium and Low. Total investment required and financing gaps based on the low scenario for investments in Subsidies, examination fees, Teaching and learning materials, school uniforms, Teacher salaries, infrastructure, grant in aid, text books, school feeding, furniture for the total program timeline. this model indicates that total allocation amounts to Le 6,087,947; while total cost of the entire program stands at Le 31,118,603. The deficit for this program investment stands at Le 25,030,628.

Recommendations

The FQSE program is a very ambitious program. It seeks to radically address the country's problems in the education sector. There is some good knowledge about the program but there is need to further improve the communication and increase knowledge on what FQSE is and what it is not with details of that government does and what it does not do.

The Government program seeks to accelerate education service delivery in innovative ways in a bid to reduce cost and lessen the burden of payment on parents, address the issues with learning materials as well as support processes that contribute to redefining the sector. These efforts need to be sustained in order to kake meaningful impact.

The Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE) has contributed to increased enrolments at all levels. There is need to keep pace with the numbers and endeavor to incorporate it into the national education system such that the trend can be maintained.

The implementation of the FQSE program has created further challenges for the organization of education in terms of supply, capacity, accommodation, quality teaching and learning demonstrated by the increase in the average school size, class size and pupil-teacher ratio seen at all levels the need for direct investment in building infrastructure is evident and Government needs to pay greater attention to this.

Ensuring equity of access to Early Childhood Care (ECC) is a critical component for the development of the foundation of the educational system. This must be given primacy in determining what this subsector should look like and how it contributes to the overall school system.

School and teacher supply at primary level was unable to keep pace with student enrolment as the average school size reached 247 pupils in 2019 (against 196 in 2018), and the average class size increased to 51 pupils (against 42 in 2018). The pupil-teacher ratio also increased 37 pupils per trained teacher. there is the need to look at the equation of the demand in teachers across all cadre of the educational system and the opportunities for continuing professional development to improve teaching and learning outcomes. These are critical to the overall learning and require some serious considerations.

National gross enrolment rate (GER) data suggests that Sierra Leone has reached overall gender parity for enrolment across all educational levels. While enrolment has increased at roughly the same rate for boys and girls at pre-primary and primary levels by 2019, at JSS and SSS levels the trend illustrates a greater increase for boys as compared to girls. It is recommended that innovative ways be designed to improve on the acceptable norms of keeping girls in the higher schooling level.

Government funding to the sector should improve even beyond what is it at present and needs to make critical decisions about the rationalization of what the FQSE should support ideally and identify what can be taken up by the education service beneficiaries in order to build the required areas of convergence for sustainability.

Adequate education financing poses serious consequences for the education of large numbers of children, especially those from the poorest families. To meet the challenges of Education 2030, it is imperative to find additional and alternative resources to improve the financing of education. Education financing through public resources is a step in the right direction but must be complemented by external aid and other innovative funding through foundations and the private sector for improved and sustained financing in the years to come.

There is the need for a rationalization of the FQSE program in order to recalibrate the implementation as well as devise innovative phased approaches to the delivery of this program.

It is also important to build the FQSE within the broader education sector plan going forward so that it does not serve as a mere project/ program in the short to medium term

PART ONE

Introduction

In Sierra Leone, education is managed by two main Government Ministries - Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) which oversees pre-primary, basic and senior secondary school education while and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE). is responsible for tertiary level technical, vocational as well as higher education[3]. Schooling is provided by both government and non-government schools. These are further classified according to several categories reflecting a combination of ownership, approval and funding arrangements. There are four main categories of school owners, these are Government, Missions, Community, and Private. It must be noted that, even though some schools are not government-owned, they are also not classified as private schools, because they receive financial support from the government for teaching and learning materials, teacher salaries, and examination fees. A further distinction made in relation to school ownership is that there are (i) government schools that are funded and managed by the government; (ii) government-assisted schools which receive financial assistance from the government, but are owned by non-government organizations such as religious missions or a community, and (iii) private schools that are privately owned, funded and managed.

The Educational system is currently organized into two main sectors:

1. **Formal education** has four sub-sectors:
   - ***Pre-primary education*** offers a three-year socialization and learning cycle for children aged three (3) to five (5) years.
   - ***Basic education*** comprises primary and junior secondary education. Primary education is a six-year cycle for children aged 6 to 11. This cycle ends with pupils taking the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), which determines eligibility for entry to junior secondary category. Junior Secondary is a three (3) year cycle. Completion of junior secondary education cycle is marked by the taking of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) for further transitioning to either senior secondary or technical as well as vocational areas.
   - ***Senior secondary education*** is over three years and is aligned to the theoretical age range of fifteen (15) to seventeen (17) years. There are two types of senior secondary education available. The first is senior secondary school (SSS) which offers a general education, and the second is senior secondary technical vocational (SSTV) which offers technical and vocational education and training. At the end of the senior secondary level, students take the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to complete the cycle.
   - ***Tertiary education*** follows secondary education and is offered by polytechnics, professional colleges and universities.

2. **Non-formal education** is offered to older children, youth and adults who, are not in the formal education system. The non-formal education system includes community education centres (CECs) which provide basic numeracy and literacy skills that allow older students to (re-)enter the formal system if they choose, or to continue on the non-formal path to acquire further skills training, or enter employment.
3.

The Free Quality School Education (FQSE) program

Recognizing the fact that Education is a key driver of social, economic and political development of any nation, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) launched the 'Free Quality Primary and Secondary Education program'(FQSE), on the 20th August, 2018 which targets government and government assisted schools all over the country[4]. The government's support of the FQSE include free fee subsidy for pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools; subsidy for children taking private examination. Fees paid by the government for National Primary School Examination (NPSE), Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Council for Technical Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA) examination. The free education program provides text books in the core subjects such as English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Integrated Science and Civic Education; and essential teaching and learning materials for children and teachers – including exercise books, pens, pencils, chalks, registers and sports equipment, and a school meal. Furniture to be provided to schools in all districts. GoSL by eliminating school

[3] Education Sector Analysis 2020
[4] Sierra Leone Telegraph, 2018

fees and providing quality education free of charge, aims to ensure that all school-age children will have access to quality education, and this approach is strengthened by implementing and enforcing the Education Act of 2004 that incriminates parents that fail to send their children to school[5].

Justification

The Free Quality School Education (FQSE), a new educational program has been introduced to address the challenges in the education system at the pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary school as well as technical/ vocational levels. The FQSE package is a deliberate strategy designed to reduce the burden of school fees, exercise and core textbooks, on parents and guardians; as well as subsidize schools to help them run smoothly. The FQSE is anchored on six core components of **Access**, which presupposes that all Sierra Leonean children must have uninterrupted access to free quality school education in the country; **Equity**, enforces that all Sierra Leonean children are enrolled in the school system of the country, regardless of their socio-economic conditions, sex, tribe, religion, physical and intellectual incapacity; **Completion**, ensures that a child enrolled in school must be followed meticulously to ensure that he/she completes his/her education to at least the basic education level**; Quality and Relevance**, ensures that the education provided in schools is of quality and is relevant to modern contexts; **Integrity**, enforces that education provided must be free from any type of fraud and malpractice; **Systems Strengthening**, seeks to develop the necessary systems and processes that will support educational development and growth. The Education For All Sierra Leone (EFA-SL), a Coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with interest in promoting education advocacy and facilitating systems and processes that increase engagement and participation in education, commissioned a study to assess the FQSE after almost two and half years of its introduction and implementation.

Purpose of the Assessment

The purpose of the research is to generate and document evidence on the quick wins and the potential challenges that are affecting the FQSE in Sierra Leone and determine a concerted approach in addressing such challenges.

Objectives

3. Assess the intermediate gains of the FQSE program focusing on the achievements and challenges.
4. Analyze the size of the government budget allocated to basic educations specifically focusing on FQSE, and ascertain the resource flows for the FQSE such as support from donors; transfers from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Education; to Local councils and to schools.

Scope of the assignment

- Provide information on progress made in the delivery of the FQSE taking access, retention and quality as key indicators for the analysis.
- Ascertain the coverage of the FQSE and how inclusive it is for girls
- Assess how the Free Quality Education has reduced cost on households' children's education.
- Interrogate the total Government budget allocation to the Education sector as a percentage to the national budget between 2018 to 2020 and resource flows from MoF to MBSSE, Local Councils and Schools for FQSE;
- Conduct relevant literature review, expert interviews and key stakeholder engagements and resource persons in the area of education and development at national level.
- Provide Education for All Sierra Leone **(EFA SL)** and partners with accurate and up-to-date disaggregated information on the state of the FQSE across all districts
- Produce a report on the findings and draw conclusions and make recommendations indicating ways in which the FQSE can be further improved

[5] Ibid

PART TWO

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used a descriptive design because it describes the state of affairs, as it existed and reporting the findings. Descriptive studies were not restricted to the findings, but also result to formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. This involved measurements, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data.

Area of study

The study was carried out in all districts across Sierra Leone. The schools chosen in the district were schools based representation selected from the list of schools per district based on the school data provided by the school census report in 2019. The study involved the following categories pre-primary schools; primary schools; junior secondary schools and senior secondary school. The rationale of selecting these schools was that the schools were all part of the Government schools, Government assisted schools and Community schools targeted by the FQSE.

Scope of data collection

Data collection was done across the country. A sample of schools targeted for the study were gleaned from the total number of schools recorded in the annual school census report 2019. 3% of the overall total number of the categories of schools in every district, were selected to represent the sample of schools required for the survey from the results of the 2019 national school census report. In total the schools recorded in the census report amounts to 11,168. Of this number, 1,758 are pre-primary schools, 7,154 are primary schools, 1,633 are junior secondary schools and 623 are senior secondary schools respectively. The table in Annex 1 provides a detail account of the categories and numbers of schools by districts in the respective regions.

Sampling procedures

The study used cluster and stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Cluster random sampling was applied because population required for the study is dispersed across wide geographic regions. This method allows for division of the study population into clusters (regions, districts and chiefdoms) and random sampling of everyone was done in those clusters. Stratified random sampling therefore involved dividing the study population into homogeneous groups, each group containing subjects with similar characteristics. Sampling therefore examined only a part of it. It is actually a process in which elements of a population selected as a representatives of the whole population. Purposive sampling, intentionally selected individuals and sites in order to learn the central phenomenon. The procedure was used to involve DEO, head teachers, teachers and parents of pupils in the school committees.

Sample size and sampling

The total number of schools recorded by the national schools' census 2019 is 11,168. Of this total, pre-primary schools represent about 15.7% of the total number of schools; 64% represents of the total number of primary schools; 14.6% represent the number of junior secondary schools and 5.6% represents senior secondary.

The sample of 3% was agreed to be selected from the school totals per district as a representative sample for the study. The total number of schools in all categories relevant to the FQSE amounts to 11,160. The 3% sample selected for the survey is approximately 335. For every district the totals were computed such that the numbers deduced represented 3% of the school totals of the respective district, from the total number of schools in every category in every region. The numbers derived were therefore selected to represent the sample per district. 3% of the total numbers by categories of schools accounted for the data collected and consequently 335 schools were proportionally selected for the survey across all categories of schools in the country. Of this number, 53 Pre-Primary Schools, 215 Primary Schools, 49 Junior Secondary Schools and19 were Senior Secondary Schools. Table 1 below presents the school category totals representing the 3% sample size selected.

Table 1 - Sample selected from total number of schools

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	Senior Secondary Schools	Junior Secondary Schools	Primary Schools	Pre-schools	Totals
National schools Totals	623	1633	7154	1758	11,168
Sample size 3%	**19**	**49**	**215**	**53**	**335**

Source: Data gleaned from Schools Census data 2019

This study intended to provide a broad assessment of the FQSE programme at the national level which is why a representative sample of schools were selected from all the administrative districts in the country to inform the FQSE implementation progress. The table below shows the districts/ regions targeted and covered. The tables below show the number of schools selected in each category of schools targeted for information soliciting with specific totals derived and the specific numbers of schools selected in each category

Table 2 - Sample schools selected per region and districts.

Western Region

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	3% of SS	3% of JSS	3% of Primary	3% of Pre-Primary	3% of Total
Freetown City	5	9	24	16	54
Western rural District	3	7	14	8	32
Total	**7**	**15**	**38**	**24**	**85**

Source: Derived from School Census Data (2019)

Eastern Region

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	3% of SS	3% of JSS	3% of Primary	3% of Pre-Primary	3% of Total
Kailahun District	1	2	12	2	16
Kenema City	1	2	6	2	11
Kenema District	0	1	14	1	16
Koidu City	1	2	3	2	8
Kono District	0	2	12	2	16
Total	**3**	**9**	**47**	**9**	**68**

Source: Derived from School Census Data (2019)

Northern Region

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	3% of SS	3% of JSS	3% of Primary	3% of Pre-Primary	3% of Total
Bombali district	1	2	9	1	13
Falaba District	0	1	6	0	7
Koinadu District	0	1	7	1	9
Makeni City	1	2	3	2	8
Tonkolili District	1	3	17	3	24
Total	**3**	**8**	**42**	**7**	**60**

Source: Derived from School Census Data (2019)

Southern Region

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	3% of SS	3% of JSS	3% of Primary	3% of Pre-Primary	3% of Total
Bo City	1	2	6	3	12
Bo District	1	2	14	1	18
Bonthe District	0	1	7	1	9
Bonthe Municipal	0	0	0	0	0
Moyamba District	1	2		1	0
Pujehun District	0	1	9	1	11
Total	**3**	**8**	**51**	**8**	**70**

Source: Derived from School Census Data (2019)

North West Region

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	3% of SSS	3% of JSS	3% of Primary	3% of Pre-Primary	3% of Total schs
Kambia District	1	2	11	2	16
Karene District	0	1	8	0	9
Port Loko District	1	4	16	2	23
Port Kolo City	0	0	1	0	1
Total	**3**	**9**	**36**	**5**	**52**

Source: Derived from School Census Data (2019)

The sample selected from all categories of schools listed which include pre-primary schools, junior secondary schools as well as senior secondary schools. The table shows the number of schools targeted per district to show the depth of data collected per school category and per district. This addresses the number of schools targeted for information collection to inform this study.

The tables above show that most of the schools' targeted constituted 25% for Western Area, 20% for the Southern region, 20% for the Eastern region 18% for the northern region and 17% for the north-west region. Western region accounted for almost 48% of all pre-school totals targeted with the rest drawing from the other four regions. For Primary schools, the eastern and southern provinces had other 45% of the total number of schools targeted for the survey. In the category of JSS the western area 30.6% of the schools were targeted followed by the North-West and Northern districts with 18.3 percent each. Whereas for the SSS categories, 36% of the schools were targeted in Western Area. These were proportional to the total number of the categories of schools in that region.

Data collection methods

In carrying out the study, both primary and secondary data were used through the following methods of documentary reviews, questionnaires and interviews.

Primary data

Primary data was obtained from three categories of respondents. The District Directors of Education; the Heads of schools (School Headmasters/ principals/ proprietors) of schools targeted; as well as parents of pupils in a school selected for the survey. Interview guides were developed to solicit information that responded to the objectives of the study as well as the critical issues outlined for interrogation in the study ToRs.

- Primary data was obtained from District Directors of Education (DDEs) in all districts selected and were interviewed using the interview guide developed. The interview sessions were done to provide a district based picture of the policy instructions on the FQSE, and how well the program has progressed to date. The interview guide for DDEs interrogated core areas which included:
    - Knowledge about the existence of a strategy/ policy for the FQSE
    - Main areas of focus for the FQSE

- Strategies for increasing enrollment especially girls' education
- Issues related to retention
- Issues associated with quality
- Issues associated with teachers (numbers, ratio and Continuing Professional Development (CPD))
- Communicating the gains of FQSE

- Primary data was obtained from Heads of schools (School Headmasters/ principals/ proprietors) in all of the schools in the selected districts. All schools in the different categories (SSS, JSS, Primary and Pre-primary) selected in as sample from all districts had their school heads interviewed. The interview with the head teachers focused largely around delivering on the promises of the FQSE at the school level. This was done to provide an opinion on how the FQSE is being delivered. This interview guide for school heads to solicit information on the following areas:
  - School type
  - FQSE programming delivery areas, inherent benefits and communication
  - State of enrolment and motivation
  - Quality/ learning environment (accommodation); teaching and learning materials; adequate teachers; Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers.
  - School subsidy and timely disbursements
  - School management committees (SMCs)

- Primary data was also obtained parents/ guardians whose children and wards attend the target schools selected. An interview guide, was designed also to target respondents in this category. Information obtained from parents/ guardians mainly corroborated information from the head teachers and other education authorities on the issue of the FQSE especially the benefits to families in particular.

Interviews

- The respondents were identified by using stratified sampling from which both respondents were obtained and were requested to answer the questions. The researcher noted down the responses given. This method of collecting information was carried out by the use of pre-determined structured and non-structured questions. It was characterized by a flexibility of approach to questioning. The interviewer was free to ask more questions in case of need, supplementary information or omit some questions if the situation requires him/her to do so. Interview guide questions were administered 16 DDEs, two pupils, 335 school head masters and 335 parents.

Secondary data

The documentary search provided an insight into problem being studied by cross validating and augmenting information obtained from other sources of data. The secondary data, were both published or unpublished information. Secondary data was mostly obtained from national program documents relating to the FQSE program as well as national education surveys such as: the Education sector analysis report; Education sector review; FQSE Results framework matrix; FQSE progress reports; School census reports, various EFA-SL education studies report; Education Financing report; Ministry of Finance Annual budgets 2018 – 2020 and other relevant education sector reports.

Survey process

The survey team leader was assisted by a study team and data collectors. For the purpose of quantitative data processing a data analyst and data inputters were part of the team.

For the data collection, this is done through a soft ware data android web based collection tool (kobo collect). The interview guides were deployed on android phones to support data collection and provide opportunity for data collection in real time and monitor progress in data collection and address emerging issues on time. 20 persons were deployed in all the study area equipped with an android phone with the tools for data collection deployed on their phones. Each enumerator was allocated a District Director for that district; a representative number of schools/ communities in each district and while they have to do the exercise for 10 days, they will be constantly be called up and visited as feedback were received from the field.

Training of Enumerators - A day workshop was organized, by the lead researcher to bring together the team of researchers and data collectors with the following objectives:

- Familiarization of all participants with the objectives of the study
- Discussion of the methodology to achieve these objectives;
- Familiarization of the data collectors with their expected role;
- Ensuring that all questions are properly understood and that the enumerators can fill in the questionnaires correctly;
- Ensuring that the questions are appropriately designed and can be easily used to obtain the required information
- Ensuring proper understanding of interviewing techniques
- Fostering team spirit among the participants and to motivate them.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The primary data from feedback from enumerators were transported in an SPSS software to develop the cross tabs for analysis. The field data collected have been analyzed and aggregated to show the overall picture and disaggregated further to show district specificities. Relevant qualitative data was extracted to support the analysis accordingly.

The ToRs specifically mentioned that part of the major areas that the study should consider was to look at the progress on the implementation of the FQSE. This is being looked at from the lenses of Access to school at all cadre of the school system targeted by the FQSE and issues of quality which have been defined to reflect some critical indicators in the overall FQSE programming. In reality the study interrogated a host of other areas that have associated bearing on the delivery of the overall FQSE.

This section analyses the progress of the implementation of the FQSE program especially the progress reported so far on the FQSE program interrogating the progress from the lenses of schools and their communities. This looks at increase in student enrolment; alongside the evolution in the number of schools, classrooms and teachers, in order to assess Sierra Leone's achievements in the area of enrolments and the associated capacity since 2017. It reviews coverage at the various levels of education and draws particular attention to key indicators of student flow across the various cycles of the system through the analysis of schools' profiles. It also looks at the state of the school-aged population to get a better understanding of issues related to the trajectory of schooling generally. This section also examines the status of equity as well as a range of dimensions categorized as Universal Access; Quality Teaching and Learning; Comprehensive Safety and Radical Inclusion.

Progress the delivery of the FQSE

The FQSE is a program of the Government of Sierra Leone with major objectives gleaned from the Results Matrix[6]:

- Component 1 - Improving Access and Completion in Basic and Senior Education and Adult Education as well as Improve Equity;
- Component 2 - Improve Quality through the provision of adequately trained teachers and school heads in basic and senior secondary, Improve Quality of education in basic and senior secondary through provision of teaching and learning materials; improve relevance of the curriculum of education and student assessment in basic and senior secondary as well as improve the integrity of the Education system;
- Component 3 - Develop Capacity at MBSSE HQ; strengthen Decentralization of Education to the District Level as well as enhance Resource Mobilization.

The analysis of data collected on the assessment is limited to certain indicators devised from and related directly to component one (1) and two (2); even though a section of this report is dedicated to the needs of the sector as recommendations, it does not specifically interrogate areas that are directly related to component three (3) of the program. The report deliberately also looks at the outlook of education financing attribute and provides some opinion on the education financing and cautions to use the forecasting section to define what is required to predictably sustain the investment over the short and medium term.

The findings of this assessment is based on field data solicited from school heads and parents of a schools identified for data collection as well as publications and reports on the state of education in the country.

Findings

Knowledge of the FQSE

The FQSE program is dedicated towards the promotion of quality education with the objective of increasing nationwide access to quality pre-primary, primary and secondary schooling. FQSE ensures that all costs for formal school education are covered by the Government and expects parents/ guardians to take responsibility for ancillary costs. It was necessary to ascertain whether what the program as defined was understood by all the players such as policy makers, schools and beneficiaries.

[6] Program Results Matrix for the Implementation Plan of the Sierra Leonean FQSE Program

The table below depicts the level of understanding among critical staff of the policy level district personnel about the FQSE. All of the districts with the exception of Bo, Pujehun and Western Rural districts could not provide adequate information that depicted their depth of knowledge and therefore could not provide responses that showed their appreciation of the question posed, hence their not too good reaction to provide positive information of this.

Table 3: Knowledge of the FQSE program

Districts	Yes	No
Bo	0.0	6.3
Bombali	6.3	0.0
Bonthe	6.3	0.0
Falaba	6.3	0.0
Kambia	6.3	0.0
Karene	6.3	0.0
Kailahun	6.3	0.0
Kenema	6.3	0.0
Kono	6.3	0.0
Koinadugu	6.3	0.0
Moyamba	6.3	0.0
Port Loko	6.3	0.0
Pujehun	0.0	6.3
Tonkolili	6.3	0.0
W/Rural	0.0	6.3
W/Urban	6.3	0.0
Total	81.3	18.8

Source: Field data

District Directors of Education - As part of the process of soliciting information on the FQSE, knowledge at the district level on the policy/ program framework was interrogated. this was to test the consistency and level of understanding among education sector policy operatives at the district level. 81% of respondents from the districts indicated that the FQSE implementation is guided by a policy or program framework. About 19% of the respondents were either not duly informed or did not provide appropriate response to this.

Respondents were further requested to submit or reference key policy documents relating to the FQSE as a way of verifying the depth of their knowledge and understanding. This revealed that a good number of the respondents were aware of the FQSE and which documentation informs the program. The responses indicated that in all but three (3) of the districts in the country had good knowledge about the FQSE. However, a range of responses provided by respondents included - 56% of the responses indicating that there was a Free Quality Education Framework in existence even though evidence of this was not provided for verification. These responses were provided by nine (9) of the districts; 18% of the respondents attributed their knowledge of the FQSE to processes related to the Radical Inclusion which was provided by three (3) districts; 6% of the responses indicated that their knowledge was informed by the Quality Assurance Document and Medium Term National Development plan, cited by two district (Bombali and Western Urban). The rest (12%) accounted for lack of responses on this question.

Even though most respondents share the same opinion of what the FQSE is, the results also revealed the level of divergent views in relation to their understanding of what the program is. All of these were processes have been set have been set in motion since the commencement of the FQSE and may be understood as part of what represent the overall engagement and design of the FQSE program.

School Head Teachers - At the level of the school system, all schools targeted had their Heads of schools interrogated on the FQSE who were also required to respond to questions on their knowledge of the program. 100% respondents indicated their knowledge of the program.

In ascertaining their level of their knowledge and understanding respondents were interrogated on the key areas that constitute the FQSE program.

All of the responses indicated the respondents' knowledge of the FQSE program. There are variations even though they all link to various strands of the FQSE program. Some 48% of the respondents indicated the non-payment of school fees; 40% indicate the supply of teaching and learning materials and 11% indicating the introduction of school feeding as key areas of the FQSE program.

Table 4: FQSE key areas - perception

Districts	School feeding program	None Payment of tuition fees	Supply of teaching & learning materials
Bo	27	40	33
Bombali	0	60	40
Bonthe	0	78	22
Falaba	0	57	43
Kambia	0	44	56
Karene	0	44	56
Kailahun	18	24	59
Kenema	41	52	7
Kono	25	50	25
Koinadugu	0	67	33
Moyamba	42	26	32
Port Loko	4	38	58
Pujehun	0	55	46
Tonkolili	0	52	48
W/Rural	0	49	52
W/Urban	2	56	43
Total	**11**	**48**	**40**

Source: Field data

It is interesting to note that in further disaggregating this data, nine (9) districts provide information that the school feeding program was not a benefit given the responses. Moyamba and Kenema district schools rated the school feeding highly with 42%, 41% respectively, in comparison with other areas. All of the districts rated the non-payment of school fees by parents as the biggest benefit provided by the FQSE program with only the exception of Kailahun and Moyamba recording 24% and 26% respectively. For responses on teaching and learning materials Kenema rated this lowly (7%) as well as Bonthe district moderately low (22%)

Parents/ guardians

Parents also had their say on the effectiveness of the FQSE program. For every head of school interviewed a parent or guardian from that same school was also targeted for interview. The parents identified were questioned on their knowledge of the FQSE program. 100% of the respondents among parent responded to have good knowledge about the program. This indicates that some good efforts that have been put into raising awareness and providing the necessary information out to communities, particularly parents engaged about this program across the country.

They were asked what specifically they could cite to indicate what they knew about the program. In ascertaining the level of their knowledge and understanding of the program, respondents were interrogated on the key areas of the program they are aware constitutes the FQSE

program. All of the responses provided information about their perceived knowledge of the FQSE program. 50% of the respondents indicated that they know the FQSE provides free teaching and learning materials in schools. This may not be unconnected with the burden removed from parents to provide their kids with learning materials; 26% revealed that the FQSE makes payment of the school fees, while 24% responses indicate the FQSE provides food for children while in school – these are some of the issues they identify as part of the FQSE program.

Parents were also specifically requested to provide information on how they got to know about the program. This was to ascertain whether conscious efforts were made by the MBSSE as well as schools to engage beneficiaries on what the program provided for the pupils as well as their parents/ guardians and communities. It is important to stress that this bordered on the whole idea of transparency in the conceptualization and delivery of education services. 100% of the respondents indicated that they gained their knowledge about the FQSE program from meetings held in the schools and Parent and Teachers meetings. From the responses provided, about 50% of the respondents indicated that information provided from meetings and the radio on the FQSE was about Government commitment to providing Free teaching and learning materials for pupils/ students and teachers; approximately 26% indicated that the FQSE was designed to allow government to meet the cost of school fees. About 24% included provision of school feeding for pupils while in school. All of the responses provided here in a way have serious bearing to the core deliverables of the FQSE program introduced and strongly underlines reducing parents' burden of out of pocket expenditures in the payment of tuition fees, supporting with learning materials for children as well as providing meals in schools.

Table 5 FQSE program– Parent Perceptions

Districts	No Payment of tuition fees	Supply of teaching and learning materials for teachers and pupils	Provision of food for my child while in school
Bo	**27.6**	**48.3**	**24.1**
Bombali	**25.0**	**50.0**	**25.0**
Bonthe	**22.2**	**55.6**	**22.2**
Falaba	**28.6**	**42.9**	**28.6**
Kambia	**18.8**	**56.3**	**25.0**
Karene	**33.3**	**44.4**	**22.2**
Kailahun	**23.5**	**52.9**	**23.5**
Kenema	**22.2**	**48.1**	**29.6**
Kono	**33.3**	**50.0**	**16.7**
Koinadugu	**27.3**	**63.6**	**9.1**
Moyamba	**31.3**	**43.8**	**25.0**
Port Loko	**25.0**	**50.0**	**25.0**
Pujehun	**23.1**	**46.2**	**30.8**
Tonkolili	**26.1**	**52.2**	**21.7**
West Rural	**24.2**	**48.5**	**27.3**
West Urban	**24.5**	**50.9**	**24.5**
Total	**25.7**	**50.2**	**24.2**

Source: Field data

In further disaggregating the responses by districts, it is interesting to note that all the districts recorded responses in higher percentages for teaching and learning materials than the two other areas with Koinadugu, Kambia and Bonthe districts recording high percentages 63% 56% and 55% respectively indicating teaching and learning materials with other three other districts recording lower percentages in this category which included Falaba, Moyamba and Karene with responses about 42% 43% and 44% respectively. Districts with relatively high responses in favour of the non-payment of tuition fees include Kono, Karene and Moyamba districts accounting for 33%, 33% and 31% respectively with correspondingly less responses to tuition fees as part of the programe in Kambia with 18% as well as Kenema and Bonthe districts with 22% responses.

For school feeding which is a highly anticipated initiative, this recorded the least in terms of parents' perception, even though like the other areas there are relatively different nuances. Pujehun, Kenema and Falaba districts returned the highest number of responses which accounted for 30%, 29% and 28% respectively and Koinadugu, Kono and Tonkolili districts retuning the lowest responses in this category accounting for only 9%, 16% and 21% respectively.

Having solicited feedback from parents on their opinion about what the FQSE seeks to do, there was the need to solicit information on whether extra payments were made to schools and for what purpose. To this question 84% of the responses in total indicated that they did not make any extra payments to schools and about 16% indicated that some extra payments were made to schools.

In the responses only four (4) (Bonthe, Kambia, Karene and Pujehun districts), out of sixteen (16) districts retuned 100% responses in favor of not making any extra payments to schools. The remaining twelve district did not return 100% in favor of not making extra payments and chose a yes even in a much smaller percentage.

Table 6 Extra payments made to school

Districts	Yes	No
Bo	20.7	79.3
Bombali	25.0	75.0
Bonthe	0	100
Falaba	14.3	85.7
Kambia	0	100
Karene	0	100
Kailahun	11.8	88.2
Kenema	7.4	92.6
Kono	4.2	95.8
Koinadugu	27.3	72.7
Moyamba	25.0	75.0
Port Loko	20.8	79.2
Pujehun	0	100
Tonkolili	17.4	82.6
West Rural	12.1	87.9
West Urban	28.3	71.7
Total	**15.**	**84.3**

Source: Field data

Given that this small percentage claims some payments were made, there was the need to solicit some information on the areas for which payments were required and were being solicited. It was not made clear whether these payments were requested covertly or overtly. The table below provides better insight into the areas for which payment were made. Overall, four main areas were provided by respondents:

- 7.3% of the respondents made payments towards uniforms with Koinadugu (18.2%) Bo (17.2%), and Western Urban (15.1%) districts mostly accounting for the numbers.

- 4,2% responded that payments were also made to support community teachers not on the Government's payroll. and the districts which mainly provided this information were Moyamba (18.8), Falaba (14.3) and Koinadugu (9.1%) districts.

- 2.7% of respondents revealed that payments were also made for passport pictures for pupils that were schedule to take public examinations in particular in districts such as Bo (6.9%), Western Urban (5.7%) and Bombali (5%) districts.

- 2.4% of respondents revealed that payments are made for accommodation (for pupils taking public exams outside with centers outside of their communities) in particular parents from Kailahun (11.8%), Moyamba (6.3%) and Tonkolili (4.3%) district.

Table 7 – Areas of extra payments to schools by Parents.

Districts	To support teachers not on payroll	Payment for uniforms	Payment for passport picture for public exams	Payment for accommodation	Not Applicable
Bo	6.9	17.2	6.9	0	69.0
Bombali	0	15.0	5.0	0	80.0
Bonthe	0	0	0	0	100
Falaba	14.3	0	0	0	85.7
Kambia	0	0	0	0	100
Karene	0	0	0	0	100
Kailahun	0	0	0	11.8	88.2
Kenema	3.7	0	0	3.7	92.6
Kono	0	0	4.2	0	95.8
Koinadugu	9.1	18.2	0	0	72.7
Moyamba	18.8	0	0	6.3	75.0
Port Loko	4.2	12.5	4.2	0.0	79.2
Pujehun	0	0	0	0.0	100
Tonkolili	4.3	8.7	0	4.3	82.6
West Rural	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	87.9
West Urban	5.7	15.1	5.7	3.8	69.8
Total	**4.2**	**7.3**	**2.7**	**2.4**	**83.4**

Source: Field data

Universal Access

Under this broad categorization for universal access, this study analysis focused also on sub thematic areas relating to enrolments, accommodation, furniture and subsidies. In these areas, field data was corroborated with recent studies in the education sector to paint the real existing situation of the sub-thematic sector situation.

Enrolments

In terms of enrolments the study solicited information on the progress so far made on enrolments since the introduction of the FQSE. The responses draw similar comclusions from the reports from the school census of 2019. Accordingly, between 2018 and 2019, enrolments increased significantly following the introduction and implementation of the Free Quality School Education Program (FQSE). The increase in enrolment occurred in all schools - government owned as well as government assisted schools (mission and community schools). At all levels, a substantial increase in enrolment is observed just with the FQSE program introduction in August of 2018, which may be an indication that there was an unmet schooling demand prior to its implementation. From the table 8 below, the enrolment totals and percentages as per the categories of schools are as follows: from 2018 to 2019 alone pre-primary recorded 28.7% increase in enrolments; 22.6% increase in enrolments at the primary school level; at the JSS levels increase enrolments were at 30.2% and SSS at 32.3%. Details of the analysis are further provided below.

Pre-primary - At pre-primary level, between 2018 and 2019, a major increase in pre-primary enrolment was observed as enrolment increased from 90,701 to 127,168 over this period alone, representing an **annual jump of about 28.7% as the system absorbed an additional 36,467 pupils**. Of the increase in the number of enrolments in preprimary schools at the district levels districts recorded mixed levels of performance. In a single year, the following districts showed marked high percentages in enrolment figures at this level. Bonthe recorded the highest jump of 48% in enrolment figures, and was followed by Bombali of 45% and followed by Kambia 41.9%. At the other end, three districts recorded

the least percentages of enrolment within this same timeframe. The districts included Moyamba, Western Urban and Falaba district with percentages as low as 17%, 17.9% and 18% respectively,

Primary Education - At the primary level, enrolment increased from 1,369,738 in 2018 to 1,770,368 in 2019; with an **enrolment of 22.6% over the one-year period**. There were more than 400,000 new learners in primary schools between 2018 and 2019. In disaggregating this data by districts, Pujehun, Falaba and Bonthe districts recorded the highest percentages in pupils' enrolment in primary schools in this single year accounting for 32.5%, 32.4% and 31.1% respectively. Districts that recorded lower enrolment percentages at this level include Moyamba, Kailahun and Western Urban with percentages in the region of about 15.5%, 16.6% and 18.4% respectively.

Table 8 - Enrolment growth between 2018 and 2019

District	Pre Primary		Primary		J S S		S S S	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Bo	8,576	12,333	136,571	180,964	28,741	41,606	20,499	26,315
Bombali	3,977	7,243	82,532	101,519	22,624	33,015	17,268	24,576
Bonthe	1,927	3,709	37,977	55,111	6,168	9,564	4,216	5,457
Falaba	833	1,016	27,207	40,249	2,670	5,255	922	1,508
Kailahun	3,294	5,380	79,791	95,621	13,438	20,262	6,804	12,132
Kambia	2,325	3,954	77,898	102,614	14,972	21,390	6,710	10,404
Karene	1,111	1,507	52,336	70,964	8,133	14,080	2,947	5,077
Kenema	5,063	7,463	129,664	165,539	30,713	42,847	20,450	29,939
Koinadugu	1,527	2,626	43,380	57,051	7,413	11,378	5,338	6,800
Kono	9,046	13,707	98,877	134,894	21,645	34,346	13,900	18,944
Moyamba	2,246	2,705	85,589	101,311	12,589	15,673	4,546	5,444
Port Loko	6,455	7,960	119,032	149,867	26,573	37,872	13,319	18,174
Pujehun	1,245	1,950	45,559	67,459	6,175	8,628	1,503	2,510
Tonkolili	4,682	7,031	107,504	139,033	19,942	28,549	10,914	14,635
Western Area Rural	10,603	14,730	87,161	113,764	27,821	41,601	18,019	31,723
Western Area Urban	27,791	33,854	158,660	194,408	65,883	85,619	59,181	91,447
TOTALS	**90,701**	**127,168**	**1,369,738**	**1,770,368**	**315,500**	**451,685**	**206,536**	**305,085**

Source: School census data

Junior Secondary – At junior secondary level, enrolment registered **a significant increase of 30% (136,185 students) between 2018 and 2019**. As observed at the district levels, the three districts that returned the highest level of enrolments at this level included, Falaba, Karene and Kono districts recording about 49%, 42% and 37% enrolments respectively. Conversely, Western Urban recorded 23% followed by Pujehun with 28% and Port Loko district with 29%.

Senior Secondary - At the senior secondary level, enrolment increased from 206,536 to 2018 to reach 305,485 students in 2019. This increase corresponds to **an annual growth of about 32.3% in enrolment is observed between 2018 and 2019**. As observed at the district levels, the three districts that returned the highest level of enrolments include, Kailahun, Western Rural and Karene districts recording about 43.9%, 43.2% and 42% enrolments respectively. Conversely, Moyamba recorded 16% followed by Koinadugu and Bo districts with 22%.

The common trend across all the school categories in terms of enrolments is that, more girls were enrolled than boys in the pre-school, primary and junior secondary school categories school. This holds true for the early stage of the education system but boys have a slightly higher advantage as the y progress in the higher levels. The table below compares the gross enrolment rate (GER) for girls and boys, and presents the Gender Parity Index (GPI) by education level. From pre-primary to the junior secondary level, gender parity indices are above one, which means that boys are slightly disadvantaged at these levels. However, by the time boys enter senior secondary school, girls are

slightly more disadvantaged than boys, with the GPI then being equal to 0.91. However, overall, the gender gaps observed in the GER are slight, regardless of the level[7].

Table 9: GER by gender and the Gender Parity Index, 2019

Gender	Pre-primary	primary	JSS	SSS
Girls	**20%**	**143%**	**81%**	**43%**
Boys	**18%**	**137%**	**78%**	**47%**
Gender Parity Index (G/B)	**1.11**	**1.04**	**1.04**	**0.91**

Source: Authors' calculation based on annual school census data and national population data

The table above indicate GER by gender and the Gender Parity Index, 2019 Pre-primary Primary JSS SSS Girls 20% 143% 81% 43% Boys 18% 137% 78% 47% Gender Parity Index (G/B) 1.11 1.04 1.04 0.91. This provides some information about gender parity in access. Therefore, to obtain a broader picture of enrolment patterns, it is useful to rely on the schooling profile. Overall, the schooling profile disaggregated by gender show that there is a high probability of girls accessing particularly primary education slightly higher than for boys, but as soon as children reach the end of this level, girls tends to be more disadvantaged in terms of enrolment than boys[8].

Retention

A comparison of access and completion estimations at each level through administrative and household survey data is provided in the Table below. Regarding the primary level, access is considerably higher when calculated using the administrative data (170%) compared to its calculation using household survey data at 89% and 91%, respectively by the Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 2017) and Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS 2018). As previously explained, one reason is that household surveys tend to provide results that are less affected by the multi-cohort phenomenon. Regarding primary completion, some similarities between the survey estimations can be noted: 75% with the MICS 2017 data and 74% with the SLIHS 2018 data, while the primary completion rate is estimated at 82% with the annual school census data from 2019. This means that around one out of five pupils still drop out of formal schooling before reaching the end of the primary level (girls being a little more disadvantaged than boys). Therefore, some effort is still needed to reduce primary school dropout rates in order to reach the 85% target for primary school completion targeted in the 2018-2020 sector plan. At the secondary levels, although some discrepancies between estimations from household surveys and administrative data are observed, it can be noted that at the JSS level, access ranges between 70% and 83%, and completion between 58% and 67%. According to all sources of data, access to SSS is estimated around 50%, while senior secondary completion ranges between 27% and 44%[9]. At all leve;ls there is a common trend that show drops in retention figures when compared to enrolments

[7] Education Sector Analysis 2020
[8] Ibid.
[9] *Education Sector Analysis 2020*

Table 10 - Summary of access rates & probabilities according to different sources of data

		MICS 2017	SLIHS 2018	Admin data 2018-2019
Primary	Access	89%	91%	217%
	Completion	75%	74%	82%
JSS	Access	68%	69%	84%
	Completion	58%	58%	72%
SSS	Access	50%	52%	50%
	Completion	35%	27%	46%

Source: culled from ESA report

The evidence provided in the table was corroborated with education policy makers and School heads in all the districts who noted that there have been noticeable changes in the retention rates over the last one year. 75% of the respondents indicate that there are some noticeable changes in the retention in schools as the trends across schools is that less pupils and students stay in school as they progress to higher classes. The implications are that there now more pupils in schools than before the introduction and implementation of the FQSE program. There is a general likelihood that this trend will continue as long as the program continues in the foreseeable future. It is evident that at thisb stage in just one year it is almost impossible to determine the levels of retention within this program. There is the absolute need to interrogate retention based on the current encouraging enrolment numbers.

Classroom Accommodation

With the massive boost in enrolment with the introduction of the FQSE, there has obviously been a dire need for classrooms and furniture in schools across the country. The FQSE project reporting on progress within the year under review, indicated that 327 classrooms have to be constructed through the IDB Project, as well as proposed 100 for rehabilitation by the 11th EDF; with another 72 classrooms to be constructed through the on-going GPE, the Japanese Government and Orange.

The National schools' census 2019 report classifies classrooms into three main categories - solid, semi-solid and makeshift. Within these groups, there are sound classrooms while others require repairs. As presented, the results of the census show that at least 52.3%, 53.2%, 64.6 of classrooms in pre-primary, junior secondary and senior secondary are solid and in good condition. 4 in 10 classrooms in primary schools are solid with no need for repair. Even though some classrooms require repair, on average 70% of classrooms in basic and senior secondary are made of permanent materials (65.9% in preprimary, 55.4% in primary, 73.9% in junior secondary and 82.5% in senior secondary). In contrast, 6.7% of the classrooms in basic and senior secondary are makeshifts with the materials used in making the classrooms being of temporary nature (twigs and grass). The share of classrooms that are makeshift varies from school level: 10.4% in pre-primary, 8.6% in primary, 4.5% in junior secondary and 3.5% in senior secondary. The results reveal that there has been considerable improvement in the share of makeshift classrooms between 2018 and 2019.

Table 11 - Increase in the total number of schools, teachers and students between 2018 and 2019

	Pre-primary		Primary		JSS		SSS	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Number of schools	**1,632**	**1,761**	**7,000**	**7,179**	**1,530**	**1,633**	**581**	**624**
Number of classrooms	**4,134**	**4,144**	**32,848**	**34,921**	**9,276**	**8,515**	**5,089**	**5,272**
Number of Teachers	**7,279**	**5,575**	**49,850**	**47,742**	**20,329**	**19,885**	**10,167**	**9,852**
Number of Students	**90,701**	**130,681**	**1,369,738**	**1,772,777**	**315,500**	**451,685**	**206,506**	**305,485**
Average School size	**56**	**74**	**196**	**247**	**206**	**277**	**355**	**490**
Average class size	**22**	**32**	**42**	**51**	**34**	**53**	**41**	**58**
Average student per teacher	**12**	**23**	**27**	**37**	**16**	**23**	**20**	**31**

Source: Authors' computation based on the Annual School Census Report (2011) and databases (2018, 2019)

Furniture - Since the provision of 3 billion for furniture in 2018, government has not allocated any funds since. Despite the provision of furniture through the 11th EDP and the IDB Projects, there is still the need for furniture in schools across the country. This is important if the Government's desire to get schools revert to the one-shift system is to be realized. The Local Government Finance Department should be engaged to advise Local Councils to procure furniture for schools in their localities

However, reports from the districts indicate that there is a dearth of classroom accommodation in schools across the country. There are still cases of overcrowded classrooms, makeshifts and classes in temporal structures. In the wider scheme of things, investments in the hard ware components such as school buildings and classroom furniture as it is only logical to assert that as the program will continue to attract huge numbers in enrolments, corresponding investments have to be made to accommodate them

Quality Teaching and Learning

Under this broad categorization, the analysis focuses on sub themes such as teaching and learning materials and the availability of teachers in schools.

Due to a protracted procurement process that lasted from December 2019 TO December 2020, the Ministry has not been able to procure Teaching and Learning Materials for the 2020/2021 academic year. In lieu of this, the FQSE has been distributing residual stock of textbooks to newly approved schools that had not received supplies before. To date the following districts have been covered: Bombali, Bo, Pujehun, Moyamba, Bonthe, Port Loko and Western Area. The Financial Secretary has been contacted to verify whether Government is prepared to procure new sets of textbooks in core subject areas next year. A meeting has been scheduled to discuss this

Recruitment of teachers continues to be one of the greatest needs of the FQSE Programme. Government has given approval for the recruitment of teachers since the program commenced. The TSC has taken some action on this. It is very clear from the submission from Head Teachers that some districts were disadvantaged during the last recruitment. This year's need to be recognizant of this imbalance. However, some good progress is being made by the TSC as the Commission is still working towards digitizing the teacher recruitment process to reduce the human interaction and compromise. Such system will reflect layers of authorization and also presents an opportunity for independent audit checks and verification.

In 2017 the commission launched it professional standards for teachers and school leaders. A proposed recruitment of around 5,000 (new additions) is expected to be added to the payroll. Teachers to be replaced will amount to 2,913. So in total, by 2020, 7,809 teachers will be recruited by the TSC and this number is representative of teachers added to the payroll and teachers who came will be replacements (this data can be updated by teacher management)

In terms of continuing professional development of teachers, a total of 10,703 JSS and SSS teachers were trained and had signed up to the Teachers Code of Conduct developed by the TSC. The first cohort of teachers targeted for this exercise were 35,133. In 2019 the commission through a pilot teacher registration exercise conducted in Western Area Urban now has a digital register of 5,412 teachers.

Since becoming fully functional, the commission provided continuous professional development trainings for teachers in professional standards, communities of practice, pedagogical skills, literacy and numeracy and mentoring. In 2019, the four core functional policies of the commission were approved by cabinet; Teacher registration, Teacher Management, Teacher Development and Performance as well as Teacher Employer Relations.

Financing Education in Sierra Leone

The Macroeconomic context

Government normally deliver services based on the situation of its economy which largely informs its priorities. It then facilitates the delivery of services based on the strength or weakness of the economy. A strong economy with the right revenue has a higher likelihood of supporting and sustaining its programs compared to a weak economy.
The following sections represent the review of the outlook of the economy, especially trends in the economic indicators, for domestic and externally generated revenue, as well as the prioritization of public programs looking at the utilization of public resources from 2017 to date.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Amid the shocks of the past decade, the economy has made a significant recovery and has been growing at 4.7% in the last four years, with agriculture contributing more than half of GDP. In constant 2018 prices, the GDP is estimated to have reached Le 34 trillion, recording a 5.2% growth between 2018 and 2019. In the last 10 years, there was an annual average growth of 4.2%, with some contraction of the economy by 20.5% between 2014 and 2015 following the EVD outbreak which virtually grounded economic activities to a halt given the imposition of measures to contain the virus in the country and its neighbors (SSL, 2018). The economy began to get back on track in 2016, registering a growth of 6.3% just one year after the great contraction. However, the current Government's fiscal and monetary policies grew by 5.2% between 2018 and 2019.

From the table below, the country's average wealth stood at approximately Le 4.8 billion in 2019 (at market prices). For 2018 prices, the per capita GDP (PCGDP) was estimated at Le 4.3 million, an increase of Le 1.091,000 from 2017. This implies that the massive increase in the PCGDP (market prices) covered the attendant inflation and was not a direct increment to the purse of benefitting individuals. The question is whether this small increment has been enough to make social services for education and health more affordable for households. Although small in size and population, Sierra Leone has one of the higher real GDP growth rates in the Africa region. In terms of people's wealth, which is critical for the acquisition of services, Sierra Leone comes second last in the region, with a PCGDP of US$1,555 purchasing power parity (PPP), about one-third of the region's average.

Table 12: GDP over the 3 years

	2017	2018	2019
GDP in billion Leone (current)	**27,615**	**32,402**	**37,712**
GDP in billion Leone (constant,	**31,322**	**32,402**	**34,080**
Annual growth rate	**3.8**	**3.5%**	**5.2%**
Composition of GDP			
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing	**50..3%**		
- Industry (mining, manufacturing)	**9.3%**		
- Service (tourism, finance …)	**36.8%**		
- Financial intermediary services	**1.2%**		
Total value added at basic prices	**95.1%**		
Taxes net of subsidies on products	**4.9%**		
PCGDP '000 (current prices)	**3,682**	**4,207**	**4,773**
PCGDP '000 (constant, 2018)	**4,177**	**4,207**	**4,313**

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, Ministry of Finance

Revenue Performance

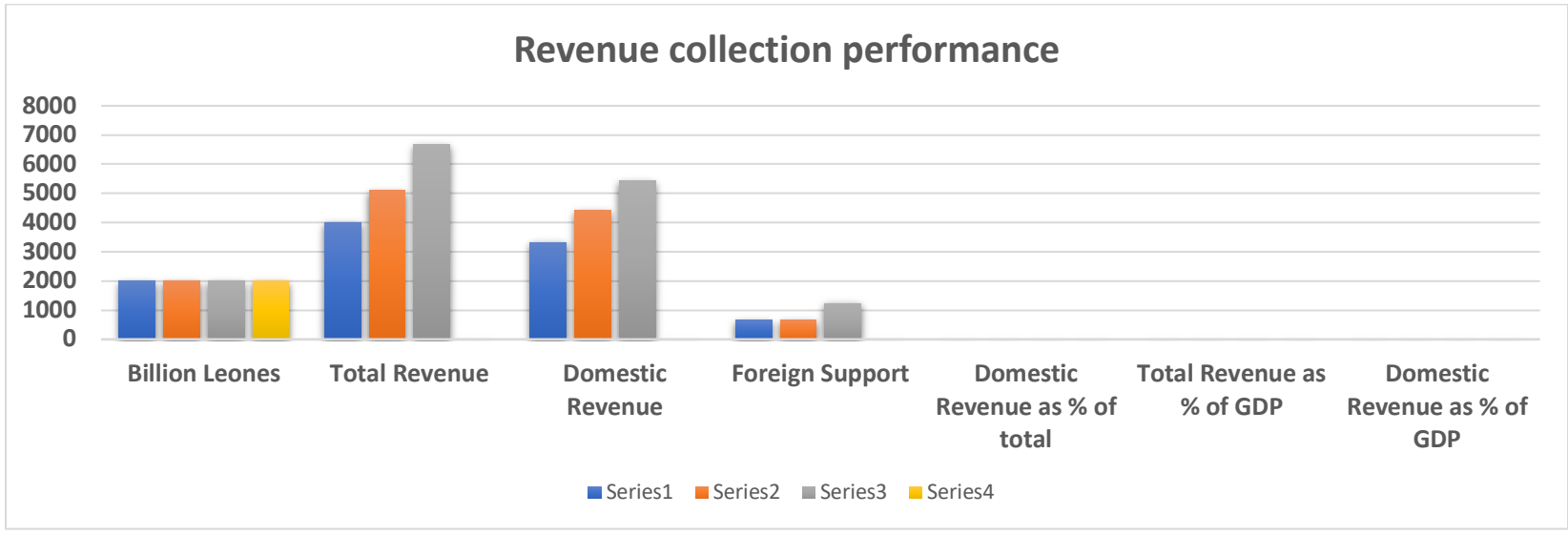
Revenue collection tripled over the last 10 years, driven by massive increases on the domestic front, and strengthening financial independence. The country's total revenue is reported to have reached Le 6.69 trillion in 2019, translating into about 18% of the GDP. Domestic revenue, which includes income tax, customs and excise duties, goods and services taxes, mineral resources taxes, and road user charges, is reported to have reached Le 5.43 trillion in 2019, translating into 14% of GDP, and representing 81% of total revenue. These results show that although the share of foreign revenue remains significant, at 19% in 2019, the increased efforts to mobilize domestic revenue is strengthening the country's financial independence drive. The net impact of this is the increased opportunity for the country to implement domestically determined priorities.

Notably, the country saw a consistent growth in revenue, growing from about Le 4.02 trillion in 2017 to Le 6.69 trillion in 2019. On the domestic front, collection of taxes and duties has been on a general increase as is on an upward trajectory. It is important to note that in in the years before 2016/2017, the increased revenue occasioned the rise in tax pressure. While the government's efforts on revenue collection are laudable, with tax pressure increasing to 14% in 2019, some effort is required in order to achieve the macroeconomic convergence criteria of a revenue to GDP ratio of 20%, agreed on by countries in the region (ECOWAS, 2017).

Table 13: Revenue Collection performance

Billion Leones	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Revenue	4,023	5,109	6,688	
Domestic Revenue	3,340	4,428	5,431	
Foreign Support	683	680	1,257	
Domestic Revenue as % of total	83.0%	86.7%	81.2%	
Total Revenue as % of GDP	14.6%	15.8%	17.7%	
Domestic Revenue as % of GDP	12.1%	13.7%	14.4%	

Source: Ministry of Finance



Government Spending

This sub-section assesses the stability and predictability of government spending, a proxy to the guarantee of the sustained investment in social sector programs like education and health

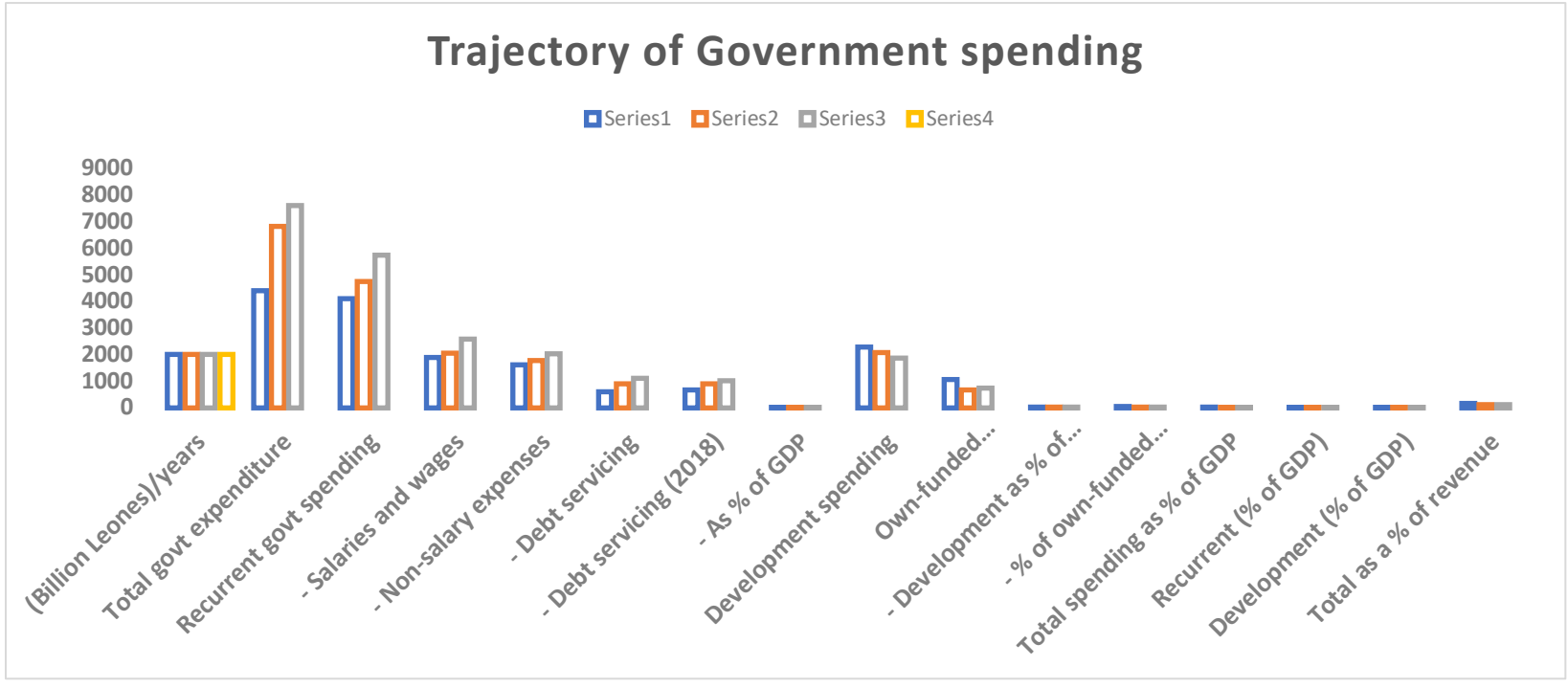
Trajectory of Government's Spending

Government expenditure tripled over the period, driven by the expansion of the wage bill and increased debt repayments. In 2019, spending reached Le 7.6 trillion, consisting of Le 5.7 trillion in recurrent and Le 1.9 trillion in development, the latter translating to 25% of total spending. The recurrent spending consisted of about Le 2.6 trillion in salaries, Le 2 trillion in non-salary spending, and Le 1.1 trillion in debt servicing. The total government spending in 2019 translates into 20% of GDP and 114% of the total revenue, demonstrating a spending commitment that is more than revenue collected. The observations in the spending are notable increase of total expenditure from Le 4.4 trillion in 2017 to Le 7.6 trillion in 2019. Recurrent spending increased mainly driven by the increase in wages and salaries which has almost quadrupled during this period. In comparison, capital spending resulted in a slump in the share of government spending on development, dropping from 8.3% in 2017 to 5.0% in 2019. Development spending is covered by government revenue as well as ring-fenced foreign budget support. The results also show that the share of government-funded development is somewhat reducing form 1,062 billion in 2017 to Le 748 billion in 2019. With this, the share of development spending that is funded by government's own resources reduced, dropping to 32.4% in 2018 before rising again to 40% in 2019.

Table 14 - Trajectory of Government spending

(Billion Leones)	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total govt expenditure	4,406	6,831	7,625	
Recurrent govt spending	4,121	4,748	5,741	
- Salaries and wages	1,890	2,057	2,578	
- Non-salary expenses	1,628	1,785	2,043	
- Debt servicing	602	906	1,119	
- Debt servicing (2018)	683	906	1,011	
- As % of GDP	2.2	2.8	3.0	
Development spending	2,285	2,083	1,884	
Own-funded development	1,062	674	748	
- Development as % of total	35.7	30.5	24.7	
- % of own-funded development	46.5	32.4	39.7	
Total spending as % of GDP	23.2	21.1	20.2	
Recurrent (% of GDP)	14.9	14.7	15.2	
Development (% of GDP)	8.3	6.4	5.0	
Total as a % of revenue	159.2	133.7	114.0	

Source: Ministry of Finance



Repayment of public debt, one of the key components of recurrent spending, has reached Le 1.1 trillion, translating into 19% of the Le 5.7 trillion recurrent spending in 2019, the implication being that the government had the opportunity to program only 81% of the recurrent spending. In 2018 prices, debt repayment was equivalent to Le 1 trillion, translated into 3% of GDP. This share exhibited an upward trend between 2017 and 2019. In 2017, the country recorded a dramatic increase in debt repayment, almost tripling between 2016 and 2017. The trend has since risen to 3%, which may potentially crowd out vulnerable government programs

Although the operating in deficit, discretionary expenditure falls within domestic revenue. Total government spending in 2019 was Le 7.6 trillion, representing 20% of GDP. The spending was against a total revenue of Le 6.7 trillion occasioning a deficit of Le 937 billion, which translates into a budget deficit ratio of 2.5% of GDP. This is just shy of the 3% recommended by the regional macroeconomic convergence pact (ECOWAS, 2017), which seeks to stabilize economic growth, curb inflation and maintain healthy monetary supply. Since 2017, the government has made a significant effort to reduce the deficit, cutting back the ratio by three times through increased revenue collection. This increased revenue collection, especially on the domestic front, resulted in the deficit on discretionary spending turning to surplus in 2019.

Trajectory of Government Spending on Education

Education spending by volume has increased over the years, its share within government discretionary expenditure had been on a general decline. Recent spending however, shows that the country is on path to restoring education as a priority. In 2019, the government spent a total of Le 1.06 trillion to cover teacher/instructor/lecturer salaries, grants-in-aid, tuition grants, purchase of books and other teaching and learning materials, development and maintenance of infrastructure, as well as administration and supervision of the delivery of education. This represented 20% of the government's discretionary spending (expenditure less debt servicing). During the 2015 World Education Forum (WEF), global leaders agreed to ensure spending on education would range from 15% to 20% of total government expenditure in a fiscal year, to facilitate the achievement of quality and equitable education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2015).

In volume, the spending on education increased to more than Le 1 trillion in 2019, growing at an annual average of 13%. In terms of the implied priority in comparison to other government sectors (based on discretionary expenditure), public spending in education exhibited mixed trends in the years preceding 2018; with a drop to a low of 15% in 2017. The share of spending on education has showed signs of recovery with this administration, gaining 5% points in 2018 to reach 20%, with a continuation of this trend in 2019, indicating that the commitment to education as a priority will likely stay, considering the programs that the present Government administration initiated in the sector in 2018.

Public expenditure on Education

The Government's education spending is done both at the level of central Ministries is mainly done through the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) as well as the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). At the Local councils' level, government expenditures support decentralized education service delivery provided through local government transfers.

It is evident that consolidated public expenditure on education has passed the one trillion Leones mark, and this accounts for mainly recurrent items. In 2018, 2019, the GoSL actual expenditures falls a bit short of one trillion Leones. The Le 11.1 billion in capital spending accounted for a paltry 1% of the total spending, implying almost no spending on investment. This is a complete departure from the overall capital investment which accounted f or 24.7% of government expenditure in the same year. In terms of recurrent expenditure, the government spent Le 937.5 billion through MBSSE, MTHE and TSC, an estimated Le 3.5 billion through the Ministry of Health's School of Nursing, and Le

105 billion through the 21 local councils[10]. Spending at central level represented 90% of recurrent expenditure, indicating that while there is a strong push for decentralization, most of the resources are still managed from the central government institutions in Freetown

Table 15 - Education Expenditure percentage of national budget

Education Expenditure Analysis (Le'm)-2018-2020				
Fiscal Year	**% of national budget**	**Projected Expenditure**	**Actual Expenditure**	**Education Financing Gap**
2018	**21%**	1,040,000.00	902,310.04	137,689.96
2019	**21%**	1,188,600.00	837,171.47	351,428.53
2020	**22%**	1,423,400.00	1,412,057.08	11,342.92
Total		**3,652,000.00**	**3,151,538.59**	**500,461.41**

Source: Ministry of Finance

The overall percentage of education expenditure over the years 2018 to 2020 accounts for up slightly over 20% of the national budget in respect to calls for Government spending 20% of its budget on Education. By 2018 and 2019, government projected and actual expenditures hit 21% with an even more increase in 2020. This demonstrates government commitment to education as its flagship program and has equally matched the level of resourcing required for such a program in the sector. In analysing where the financial resources got allocated to, the analysis revealed that approximate percentage of funding for basic and senior secondary education accounts for 21.3% in total from the total sector budget.

Generally, the recurrent cost for education expenditures, Teacher salaries consume the largest share of the expenditure at 41.0% of the total education expenditures over the last 3 years of the implementation of the FQSE. For this category of expenditures approximately 56% goes towards the payment of salaries for primary and secondary school teachers for the year 2020. This shows that a substantial portion of the investment in education accounts for the payment of salaries and a greater percentage of that proportion accounts for payments for teachers in primary and secondary schools.

For the recurrent (non-salary and non interest) component of the education financing, the government total expenditures account for 41.5% over the three-year period 2018 to 2020. Central Ministries of education of education (MBSSE and MHTE) as well as transfers to Local councils accounted for approximately 38.6% of the total expenditures. From this percentage, total central Ministries expenditures carry 29.3% while 9.3% accounts for transfers to local councils. The bulk of the approximately 60% goes towards tertiary education and the Teaching service commission.

The percentage of expenditure expended by central Ministries expenditure items are as follows School; Textbooks – Teaching and learning materials 15.0% only 6.3% was expended for primary education with expenditures towards school feeding and support to physically challenged schools. Secondary education, however accounted for 33.6% which were support towards Grants in Aid to Government Boarding Schools and tuition fees with subsidies accounting for 12.3%; Examination Fees to WAEC for WASCE which apply to the three examination classes only consume the least at 1.1%. Development budget is very marginal and is not consciously reflected as part of Government's investment in Education.

FQSE proposed investment for Implementation

The MBSSE developed a simulation model to cost all the elements of the FQSE according to the Results Framework. The model makes some generalized assumptions to project equal annual changes in key parameters over the Plan Period. It is based on learner projections over the Plan Period of 2019 – 2023 which in turn are based on the school age population statistics and retention rates, transition rates from cycle to the next. Data utilized in setting the investment scenario uses UN statistics because of some flaws in the errors in the Statistics Sierra Leone data. the assumptions were as follows: Real GDP growth will remain over 5% over the Plan Period of 2019 to 2023; Overall population

[10] Education sector analysis report, Sierra Leone 2020

growth rate (% p.a.) will remain below 2.5% over the Plan Period; Percentage allocation to education will remain at at least 21% over the Plan Period with about 80% of this allocated to Basic and Senior Secondary Education; The exchange of the Le to the US$ used is 8,300

The model is based on three scenarios, the High, Medium and Low (which is basically the status quo). The following areas were costed in the simulation model:

1. ***Enrolment Trends 2019 - 202***3

UNDP school age population data was used estimating increase in school enrolments; total enrolments are expected to increase from 1,982,000 in 2019 to 3,401,000 in 2023; those in approved Government and Government Assisted schools are expected to increase from 1,269,000 in 2019 to 2,714,000 in 2023; The percentage of students in approved Government and Government Assisted Schools is expected to increase from 64% to 80% over the Plan Period

2. ***School subsidies*** 2019 - 2023

Subsidies per student are estimated at Le 20,000 for Pre-primary, 40,000 for Primary, Le 50,000 for JSS and Le 60,000 for SSS over the Plan Period; Cost Estimate will increase from 200.7 billion in 2019 to 352.7 billion in 2023; Budget allocation will increase from 55.2 billion 2019 to 121.0 billion in 2023; Financing gap will increase from 145.6 billion in 2019 to 231.7 billion in 2023; Total financing gap over the Plan period will be Le 936.57 billion. (US$112.84 million)

3. ***Examination fees 2019 - 2023.***

Examination fees per student are estimated at 60,000 for Primary, 140,000 for JSS and 270,000 for SSS; Cost Estimate will increase from 33.0 billion in 2019 to 44.5 billion in 2023; Budget allocation will increase from 30.6 billion 2019 to 35.2 billion in 2023; Financing deficit will move from -2.4 in 2019 reaching a surplus of 3.2 in 2020 before dropping to – 9.3 in 2023.Total Surplus over the Plan period will be Le 10.68 billion (US$1.29 million); Government is in arrears on its dues to WAEC and there is a high likelihood the examination fees will be increased over the Plan Period and therefore likely reduce the surplus

Table 16 - Simulation scenarios

	Scenarios	1		High			
	Target	**Baseline**	**Target Year**		**High**	**Medium**	**Low**
Pre-Primary Gross Enrolment Rate	40%	15%	2023		40%	35%	15%
Access to Primary 1	115%	138%	2023		115%	125%	138%
Repetition in Class 1	10%	17%	2023		10%	12%	17%
Transition between P6 and JS1	95%	91%	2023		95%	93%	91%
Transistion between JSS3 and SSS1	75%	67%	2023		75%	70%	67%
Share of Enrolment in Government Assisted Schools							
Pre-primary	50%	35%	2023		50%	45%	35%
Primary	80%	63%	2023		80%	70%	63%
Junior Secondary	85%	70%	2023		85%	80%	70%
Senior Secondary	85%	73%	2023		85%	80%	73%
Pupil Quaified Teacher Ratio							
Pre-primary	25	52	2023		25	40	52
Primary	40	52	2023		40	45	52
Junior Secondary	40	35	2023		40	37	35
Senior Secondary	35	45	2023		35	40	45

Source: MBSSE simulation model presentation

4. ***Teaching and learning materials 2019 - 2023.***

The total estimate of TLMs comprise of TLMs for the students; TLMs for the classes; and Resources for Teachers; Cost Estimate will increase from 53.1 billion in 2019 to 88.0 billion in 2022 and drops to 77.5 in 2023; Budget allocations will increase from 3.4 billion 2019 to 25.7 billion in 2023; Financing gap will increase from -49.7 billion in 2019 to -69.6 billion in 2022 and -551.7 in 2023; Total financing gap over the Plan period will be Le 270.24 billion (US$32.56 million); There is no allocation for TLMs for Pre-primary, JSS and SSS so this comparison is against what is provided for Primary

5. ***School Uniforms 2019 - 2023***

Unit for school uniforms without shoes are - Pre-primary – Le 50,000, Primary – Le 75,000, JSS and SSS– Le 150,000; It is assumed uniforms will be replaced annually; Cost Estimate will increase from 294.3 billion in 2019 to 530.3 billion in 2023; There is no budget allocation for school uniforms in the 2019 Budget approved by Parliament; Financing gap will increase from -294.3 billion in 2019 to -530.3 billion in 2023; The total financing gap over of the Plan period will be 2.01 trillion (US$ **240. million)**

6. ***Teachers' Salaries***

The number of teachers on payroll in approved schools will increase from 36,695 in 2019 to 70,131 in 2023; Cost Estimate will increase from 703.8 billion in 2019 to 1,131.2 billion in 2023; Budget allocations will increase from 631.6 billion 2019 to 1,219.1 billion in 2023; There will be a deficit of 72.2 billion in 2019 and a surplus of 87.9 billion in 2023; The total deficit over the Plan Period will be Le 92.69 billion (US $11.17 million).

7. ***University Tuition Fee Incentive for Teachers with over 10 Year Experience (2019 – 2023)***

Number of qualified teachers in Pre-Primary to SSS with 10 year experience and above are estimated at 34% of total number of teachers in approved Govt. and Govt. Assisted schools; Number of teachers with 10 years' experience will increase from 12,476 in 2019 to 28,052 in 2023; Number of children per teacher is estimated at 1 since some will have none and some will have the required 3. Eligibility for university enrolment will be another factor; The Incentive will be financed from the Grants in Aid allocation in the Budget; Tuition fees are estimated at 6,000,000 per annum; Tuition fee incentives will increase from 87.9 billion in 2019 to 168.3 billion in 2023; Budget allocation will increase from 18.5 billion 2019 to 22.9 billion in 2023; Financing gap will increase from 69.4 in 2019 to 145.5 billion in 2023; The total financing gap over the Plan Period will be Le 491.15 billion (US$59,173.37 Million)

8. ***Textbooks (2019 – 2023)***

The costing of the textbooks is based on a ratio is 1:1 for all core subjects; Replacement of books is expected to be done every 3 years and this will require a huge outlay of capital as enrolments increase; New textbooks will be needed annually to cater for new enrolments in between national replacement of textbooks; the total estimate of textbooks at the end of the 5 year period will be 1,659 billion against a budget allocation of 148.5 billion with a financing gap of Le 1,511 billion (US$182.05 million)

9. ***School feeding Program***

The school feeding will be implemented in districts identified as vulnerable. Currently there are 5 such districts; The Government financed programme will run in conjunction with the those provide by other partners; The cost estimate will increase from 69.9 billion in 2019 to 102.34 in 2023; The financing gap will increase from 0.28 billion in 2019 to 2.63 billion in 2023; The total financing gap over the Plan period will be Le 4.29 billion (US$0.52 million).

Summary for Recurrent Cost 2019 - 2023

High Scenario - Total recurrent cost for the High Scenario is estimated at Le 11.07 trillion (US $1,33 billion) against an allocation of Le 5.78 trillion giving a financing gap of Le 5.28 trillion (US$636.39 million) over the Plan Period.

Medium Scenario - Medium Scenario Summary Costs 2019 – 2023
Total recurrent cost is estimated at Le 9.80 trillion (US $1.180 billion) against an allocation of Le 5.78 trillion giving a financing gap of Le 4.01 trillion (US$483.37 million) over the Plan period

Low Scenario - Low Scenario Summary Costs 2019 – 2023
Total recurrent cost is estimated at Le 8.82 trillion (US$1.062 billion) against an allocation of Le 5.78 trillion giving a financing gap of Le 3.03 trillion (US$365.06 million) over the Plan period.

Distribution of Recurrent Expenditure by Category 2019 - 2023
Teacher salaries consume the largest share of the expenditure at 41.0%
Other big expenditure items are School uniforms (18.2%); Textbooks (15.0% and Subsidies (12.3%).
Examination fees which apply to the three examination classes only consume the least at 1.1%

10. Classroom furniture
Furniture were also costed for the following: Classrooms to be Repaired; Classrooms to Eliminate Double Shifting; Classrooms to replace dilapidated classrooms; Classrooms to accommodate increase in enrolments; New schools to accommodate increase in enrolments. The furniture for a 2-seater bench for all levels; There is no allocation in the budget for provision of classrooms; The total cost of this furniture over the plan period is Le 359.58 billion. The total financing gap over the Plan period will be Le 359.58 billion ($43.32 million)[11].

Table 18 Total investment required and financing gaps

Expenditure Category	Total Allocation Le Mn	Total Cost Le Mn	Deficit Le Mn	% Deficit
Subsidies	430,044.60	1,366,611.00	(936,566.40)	-217.8%
Examination fees	165,274.80	125,954.00	39,320.80	23.8%
TLMs	62,322.10	332,562.00	(270,239.90)	-433.6%
School Uniforms	-	2,019,254.46	(2,019,254.46)	
Teacher Salaries	4,444,169.00	4,537,138.37	(92,969.37)	-2.1%
Infrastucture	306,900.00	19,637,191.19	(19,330,291.19)	-6298.6%
Grants in Aid	108,332.10	599,471.05	(491,138.95)	-453.4%
Textbooks	148,472.00	1,714,091.79	(1,565,619.79)	-1054.5%
School Feeding	422,460.10	426,746.49	(4,286.39)	-1.0%
Furniture	-	359,583.34	(359,583.34)	
Total	**6,087,974.70**	**31,118,603.69**	**(25,030,628.99)**	**-8437.1%**
Total in US$ Mn	**$733.49**	**$3,749.23**	**($3,015.74)**	**(166.56)**

Source: MBSSE simulation model presentation

[11] *Implementation Plan for the Free Quality School Education and Costings (unpublished)*

Conclusion and Recommendations

The FQSE program with all the things it is set out to achieve, makes it a very ambitious program. This comes with the courage of education leadership in Sierra Leone to undertake this venture as a way to radically address the country's myriad of problems in the education sector. The idea to rejuvenate the sector is a very noble one, particularly looking at the bigger picture with the potential benefits the country stands to gain. The Government has so far couched its support for the sector in a program that seeks to accelerate education service delivery in innovative ways in a bid to reduce cost and the burden of payment on parents, address the issues with learning materials as well as support processes and initiatives that contribute to redefining a once vibrant sector. It can therefore be recommended that:

The introduction of the government's Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE) has contributed to this increased growth at education levels which in turn has impacted the overall picture of mass enrolments at all levels. There is need to keep the levels up and endeavor to incorporate the program as part of the national education system such that this trend continues into the foreseeable future.

Overall, the implementation of the FQSE programme has created further challenges for the organization of education in terms of supply, and the capacity to accommodate students, as shown by the significant increase in the average school size, class size and pupil-teacher ratio seen at all levels between 2018 and 2019. The almost not existent government direct investment in building infrastructure in the government budget begs the question about the capability of government to address the surge of enrolment in schools. As such, government needs to provide budgetary allocations towards schools' infrastructure.

Ensuring equity of access to Early Childhood Care (ECC) is a critical component of development of the foundation of the educational system. This must be given primacy in determining what this subsector should look like and how it contributes to the overall school system. The Early Childhood Care Development (ECCD) services especially in rural areas will require some greater attention and ensure the services become equitable, otherwise most rural areas will remain underserved. There is therefore the need to pay more attention to preschools as a matter of urgency and Government should endeavor to invest more in the foundation category of the education system as investment is currently low in this category.

At pre-primary level, although the number of schools increased, enrolments increased by an even bigger margin, driving the average pre-primary school size from 56 to 74 pupils, while the average class size grew from 22 to 32 pupils between 2018 and 2019. The average pupil-teacher ratio also increased significantly from 12 pupils per teacher in 2018 to 23 pupils per teacher in 2019. As pupils numbers rise in pre-schools, this need to be matched with a corresponding recruitment with appropriate training to meet the needs of teaching

School and teacher supply at primary level had also not kept pace with student enrolment as the average school size reached 247 pupils in 2019 (against 196 in 2018), and the average class size increased to 51 pupils (against 42 in 2018). The pupil-teacher ratio also increased 37 pupils per trained teacher. You factor in an equation of the current demand in teachers across all cadre of the educational system and the opportunities for continuing professional development to improve teaching and learning outcomes leave huge gaps that also require some serious considerations.

A closer analysis of the 2019 GER by gender and district however, reveals a number of geographical disparities. National gross enrolment rate (GER) data suggests that Sierra Leone has reached overall gender parity for enrolment across all educational levels. While enrolment has increased at roughly the same rate for boys and girls at pre-primary and primary levels by 2019, at JSS and SSS levels the trend illustrates a greater increase for boys as compared to girls. It is recommended that innovative ways be designed improve on acceptable norms that would provide the enabling environment for girls to get to senior levels in the school system.

Government funding to the sector should improve even beyond what is it at present and needs to make critical decisions about the rationalization of what the FQSE should support ideally and identify what can be taken up by the education service beneficiaries in order to look at sustaining the program.

There is a need to roll out the subsidy use guidelines as there are reports that schools are still using the fee subsidies for expenditures for areas that are not adequately defined. This will reduce the possibility of wastages and support the schools to ensure they continue to develop and provide the required services.

Adequate education financing poses serious consequences for the education of large numbers of children, especially those from the poorest families. To meet the challenges of Education 2030, it is imperative to find additional and alternative resources to improve the financing of education. Education policy-makers can explore three areas – public resources, external aid, and innovative funding – for improved financing in the years to come.

Use of Public Resources - More efficient and equitable use of public expenditure on education could generate significant room for finding new funding sources. To achieve quality universal basic education, resources should be redirected to benefit the most disadvantaged. Difficulties of schooling disproportionately obviously affect rural areas that have relatively weak social infrastructures and an insufficient number of trained and qualified teachers. Education policy-makers should lever of action in targeting these areas.

External Assistance - The international community should increase its efforts to achieve Education 2030. There has been a steady decrease in support to education in the face of financial crisis globally. Financing education would require stronger backing from international education financing institutions. The Global Partnership for Education's funding conference, held in Dakar in February 2018, showed that donors could commit to giving more. The MBSSE should particularly strongly engage in the GPE replenishment processes as another window of opportunity for external education financing.

Innovative Financing - alternative solutions at the level of innovative financing should be explored and adopted to our country context. This is particularly the case to address both formal and non-formal vocational development through public-private partnerships. This can contribute to the financing of sectors associated with the economic demand of the country.

Annex 1 Category of school count by regions and districts.

DISTRICT/COUNCIL	Senior Secondary	Junior Secondary	Primary Schools	Pre-schools
Eastern Region				
Kailahun District	19	56	396	52
Kenema City	39	78	197	80
Kenema District	8	47	467	28
Koidu/ New Sembehun City	25	58	114	64
Kono District	14	60	397	81
Total	**105**	**299**	**1571**	**305**
North-West Region				
Kambia District	27	77	352	50
Karene District	13	49	275	15
Port Loko District	39	149	517	80
Port Loko City	6	16	43	15
Total	**85**	**291**	**1187**	**160**
Northern Region				
Bombali district	17	63	286	33
Falaba District	6	21	210	10
Koinadu District	10	39	248	29
Makeni City	28	51	92	58
Tonkolili District	29	101	578	103
Total	**90**	**275**	**1414**	**233**
Southern Region				
Bo City	25	62	203	110
Bo District	22	70	483	44
Bonthe District	9	27	226	39
Bonthe Municipal	3	5	8	4
Moyamba District	27	73	503	33
Pujehun District	9	26	287	27
Total	**95**	**263**	**1710**	**257**
Western Area				
Freetown City	163	287	803	529
Western Area Rural District	85	218	469	274
Total	**248**	**505**	**1272**	**803**

Source: School Census Data (2019)

Annex 2Financial statements of expenditures – 2018 - 2020

Analysis of Education Sector spending 2018-2020 (In million leones)	FY2018 (Jan – Dec)	FY2019 (Jan – Dec)	FY2020 (Jan – Dec)
Recurrent Salaries	**443,847.7**	**321,765.5**	**1,077,835.6**
Primary Education	274,252.0	150,430.8	414,805.5
Secondary Education	132,565.2	70,381.3	188,186.7
Tertiary Education (inc. Tertiary Education Commission)	2,297.0	15,159.1	107,577.5
Technical/ Vocational Education	21,823.1	10,632.0	130,309.8
Education Staff	9,523.4	5,700.4	40,368.8
Teaching Service Commission	3,387.1	4,021.1	10,526.2
Salaries of Lecturers of Tertiary Institutions	-	65,440.8	186,061.2
Domestic Capital Expenditure	**3,355.0**	**35,984.3**	**51,592.6**
Rehabilitation of Fourah Bay College	3,355.0	7,500.0	14,463.5
Enhancement of Capacity of MBSSE for Monitoring & Supervision of Schs			4,392.9
Focused Resources on Equity and Excellence (FREE)			28,846.0
Construction of University of Science and Technology (UST) in Kono			271.0
Rehabilitation and Refurbishment of Technical and Vocational Training Centres		326.6	
Institutional and Capacity Building to Technical and Vocational Education			
Rehabilitation of Port Loko Teachers College			
Teaching and Learning Materials	-	28,157.7	3,619.3
Analysis of Education Sector spending 2018-2020 (In million leones) Recurrent (Non Salary Non interest)	**FY2018 (Jan – Dec)**	**FY2019 (Jan – Dec)**	**FY2020 (Jan – Dec)**
Central Ministry			
Primary Education	**31,581.7**	**21,581.2**	**5,500.0**
School Feeding	30,200.0	18,500.0	5,500.0
Physically Challenged Schools	1,381.7	3,081.2	
Secondary Education	**100,233.3**	**89,409.8**	**120,690.7**
of which: Grants in Aid to Government Boarding Schools	7,030.8	209.7	22,268.8
of which: Examination Fees to WAEC for WASCE	5,428.6	27,487.4	37,585.6
Of which: Tuition Fees Senior Secondary Schools (SSS)	8,912.7	37,300.2	26,636.3
of which: Core Textbook	78,861.3	24,412.6	34,200.0
Tertiary Education (inc. Grants-in- Aid)	**251,957.0**	**251,168.3**	**46,859.8**
0f Which: Grants -in Aid	11,528.1	23,228.5	1,157.5
0f Which: Subventions to Tertiary Institutions	181,503.8	127,963.5	36,326.1
Of which: Technical/ Vocational Education	14,493.0	3,279.5	6,771.8
Teaching Service Commission	**1,306.0**	**531.2**	**2,604.4**
Analysis of Education Sector spending 2018-2020 (In million leones)	**FY2018 (Jan – Dec)**	**FY2019 (Jan – Dec)**	**FY2020 (Jan – Dec)**
Transfers to Local Councils			
Primary Education	**29,172.4**	**47,817.5**	**40,020.3**
Of which: Tuition Fees (Pre Primary Schools)	284.0	651.2	697.8
Of which: Tuition Fees (Primary Schools)	9,820.8	35,560.6	26,442.5
Teaching and Learning Materials	13,618.7	-	
Examination Fees for NPSE	4,438.8	8,156.0	8,685.9
Education Development Grant	1,010.1	3,449.6	4,194.1
Secondary Education	**40,856.9**	**68,913.8**	**66,953.7**
Examination Fees for BECE	7,591.3	15,507.8	18,642.5
Local Council Transfers(Basic Education & Libraries)	9,320.6	11,323.5	9,406.8
Procurement of 20 School Buses	12,270.1	-	2,914.1
Tuition Fees-Junior Secondary School (JSS)	11,674.9	42,082.5	35,990.3

Source: Ministry of Finance